

socialist standard

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Fanatics and utopias

You're better off with real socialism

PLUS

Brexit: 56 days after

Terrorism and war

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Introducing the Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism.

Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.



We use every possible opportunity to make new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks

and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join the Socialist

Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

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Corbyn: set up to fail

AT THE Labour Party Conference in September, Jeremy Corbyn successfully saw off his challenger, Owen Smith, and will be leading the Party into the next General Election with promises to build half a million council homes, nationalise the railways and invest in the Green economy. Will a Corbyn-led government be able to live up to its promises?

The history of previous Labour governments does not augur well. Like Jeremy Corbyn, they made bold pledges, but faced with the reality of the capitalist system, they had to backpedal or go into reverse and implement anti-working class policies that would have made the Tories proud.

Ramsay MacDonald, Prime Minister of the 1929-31 Labour government, cut unemployment benefit and public sector pay in response to the Great Depression. Clement Attlee's 1945-51 government did establish the NHS and introduced some reforms that were beneficial to workers, but it also sent in troops to break the dockers' strike of 1949 and developed the UK's first nuclear weapons. Its nationalisation of the coal and steel

industries was not the victory for the working class as some imagine, as these industries, like their counterparts in the private sector, have to operate at a profit, and this, at times, involved pay disputes, redundancies and strike action.

In response to a balance of payments crisis, Harold Wilson's government of 1964-1970 introduced an incomes policy to limit workers wages, and re-introduced prescription charges in the NHS. It opposed the seamen's strike of 1966 and, although stopping short of sending troops, it supported the American war effort in Vietnam. It also gave its backing to the Nigerian government, in its civil war against the Biafran people, which resulted in mass starvation.

The Labour government of 1974-1979, in response to the recession of 1974-75, initiated a programme of public expenditure cuts and, in order to combat inflation, introduced an income policy restricting workers' pay, which resulted in the winter of discontent in 1979. It also employed troops to break the firefighters' strike in 1978.

Then came along New Labour in 1997,

which also promised a bright future after the Tory years. It introduced the Private Finance Initiative bill, which introduced private capital into the public services, and participated in the invasion of Iraq.

The Labour Party was formed in 1906 not with the aim of abolishing capitalism but with that of reforming it in favour of working class people. But capitalism can only work in one way -- to accumulate wealth in the interests of those who own and control the means of production at the expense of those who have to work to create this wealth. Labour governments can implement some reforms, but cannot change fundamentally the way capitalism works.

When workers are presented with our case for abolishing capitalism and establishing a world society of common ownership without wages, money or nation states, they usually dismiss this as utopian and argue that it is more realistic to elect a reforming Labour government. However, we say that it is the policy of the Labour Party to reform capitalism that is utopian, and that our vision of socialism is the only realistic option.

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Vision Impossible

IT PROBABLY escaped most people's notice that it's 500 years since the publication of Thomas More's seminal work *Utopia*, the first systematic attempt since Plato to set out the definition of an ideal society, though regrettably this includes (in More's case) royal princes, priests, the subjection of women, and slaves.

Not everybody missed the occasion though, as a recent 'Utopia' art exhibition in London's Somerset House bore witness. And with an eye for a good cover story, *New Scientist* recently went with 'Utopia – the quest for the perfect society, and the lost civilisation that found it' (17 September).

This is of interest to socialists, not because we have the slightest faith in perfect societies (and even less belief in supposedly lost paradises), but because we so rarely see any mainstream discussion which dares to venture outside the capitalist paradigm. Utter the word 'utopia' and we're almost bound by law to follow the debate, even if we usually come away disappointed with the poor quality of the arguments.

So, to begin, what was the civilisation that, according to the magazine, was a utopia? The Indus Valley civilisation, active in the Bronze Age from around 2600 to 1900 BC. Why was it a utopia? Because of the lack of defensive structures, obvious military weaponry and other signs of organised conflict. There is also no sign of palatial structures, monuments or depictions of obvious rulers, implying a lack of social classes. This is significant, given that such evidence is abundant for contemporary civilisations in Egypt and the Twin Rivers.

Carl Sagan liked to stress that absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. But just as a lack of bus stops would strongly imply a lack of buses, in archaeology one can learn as much from what one doesn't find as from what one does. Sir Arthur Evans, the excavator of Knossos in Crete, found no defensive structures and controversially claimed on the basis of this that Crete during the Minoan civilisation (3650 – 1400 BC) enjoyed a Pax Minoica (Wikipedia). This view is still open to debate, although evidence of warfare is even today described as 'scanty'.

Such claims have been made before, only to be overturned. The Maya were thought to be peaceniks until their inscriptions were deciphered, and they turned out to be full of bloody battles and torture-porn. Interestingly, the Indus culture also has a script which has not been deciphered.

Still, war-free complex societies are

known to go back a long way. Çatalhöyük, a Neolithic settlement in Turkey dating from around 7,500 BC, famously lacks any sign of warfare, or of social or gender stratification.

Why did the Indus culture die out? Possibly due to climate change, or the Indus river changing course, or earthquakes. Not content with such prosaic reasoning, some commentators can't resist sticking the capitalist boot in, arguing that the demise was ideological in form, resulting from a lack of conflict-driven dynamism and invention which led to cultural sclerosis and death. Of course there's no evidence for this claim, and it doesn't make much sense either. If lack of conflict is bad for you, one wonders how humans managed to survive the approximately 2.5 million years of the Palaeolithic, during which time there is no evidence of warfare whatsoever.

So were these places 'utopias'? Hardly. But they suggest that war and conflict did not always and automatically follow from the development of complex societies after the expansion of agriculture. In other words, war was not normal behaviour but a forced adaptation to hostile local conditions. Where those conditions did not apply, war did not appear. This may seem obvious but it is crucially relevant today, because we humans now have the technology to change our conditions. Logically, if we change them in the right way, we can make war disappear.

So what of the magazine's other statement about 'the quest for the perfect society'? This amounted to a booklist of utopian and dystopian novels, featuring some obscure 17th century texts but with some surprising omissions, such as Sam Butler, Edward Bellamy, Jack London, Barry Skinner and William Morris. But this might be because the writer defines 'utopia' less as a political idea than a form of artistic escapism: 'They are never places evolved from the here and now, but fantasies conjured from scratch,

pristine and unsullied, out of sheer yearning'. In other words, if your future society is in any way based in reality, it's not really a utopia. Which is a fair point.

'Utopian' is a bullying and derogatory term used by people who believe in the status quo and want to discredit alternatives as unrealistic. While there have been genuinely utopian novels (and utopian socialists) the vast majority of either are not trying to create perfect societies, just better ones. 'Normative fiction' is a more accurate phrase, meaning fiction based on what ought to be, according to the writer, as opposed to what is.

What 'normative' novels do socialists like? Three perennial favourites are Morris's *News From Nowhere* (1890), Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (1974) and Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976). They're not perfect though. Morris was a decent writer but his novel is dragged to a standstill by the weight of exposition, and the romantic medievalism looks hopelessly quaint nowadays. The Le Guin story seems so keen not to be accused of utopianism that its anarchist planet is rendered as a Dune-style hellhole full of miserable ascetics, while Piercy's work has some weird notions about gender equality (men getting womb implants) and suffers somewhat from its own framing device, which makes the anarcho-socialist 'vision' look unflatteringly like the delusion of a paranoid schizophrenic.

Do people call us 'utopians'? Of course, and for the reason given above. But really, all talk of utopias is beside the point. Utopias don't exist, but dystopias do, and we know that because we're living in one. Though there are many good things about capitalism, it is a real-life dystopia that only suits the rich, and we don't need perfect visions to tell us what we need to do about it.

PJS



What could socialism be like?

Socialism will be a global society based on the common ownership and democratic control of the world's natural and industrial resources. But how might this work? How will production, decision-making and culture be affected?

There will be a complete transformation in the calculation of resources, and their production and distribution. In capitalism articles of wealth (commodities) are produced to be bought and sold on markets, at a profit. This trade in commodities generates: waste; pollution and externalities; overproduction and under-production; built-in obsolescence; quantity over quality; crisis and booms; poverty amidst plenty; employment for some and a waste in human potential for most; and obscene wealth for the few.

With no commodity production and trade there will be no exchange value and prices, just the inputs and outputs of resources and human needs. The decision-making process will aim to ensure there's sufficient stock control to meet projected needs through calculation in kind.

This decision-making process will also configure: environmental impact assessments; a high standard of quality control and durability; positive recycling - where products will be deliberately designed so to ensure that they last longer and when they are passed their usefulness all their component parts are easily recycled into other useful products; and transportation miles for distribution of human needs so the shortest journey possible is covered. This efficiency of calculation will ensure the energy required for producing needs will be kept to a minimum and promote the production of renewable energy sources.

Decision-making

Here the system will be participatory delegate democracy. In capitalism political parties represent the sectional interests within the capitalist class with all of them competing for political control of the state and its machinery of government. With no sectional interests to be represented when there is common ownership, there won't be political parties or a state machinery. Nonetheless, major issues will be thrashed out with decisions being made on what's the best course of action for gaining a successful outcome.

A bottom up decision-making process involving voluntary participation cannot be imposed by a hierarchy or a vanguard or the concept becomes meaningless. The basic building block is the

community or neighbourhood assembly, face-to-face meetings where citizens meet to discuss and vote on the issues of the day, not that there will need to be a vote on every issue as most of day-to-day work carried out will be routine. These assemblies elect mandated and recallable delegates who then link with other assemblies forming a confederated council, a 'community of communities'. The difference between this form of delegate democracy and our current form of representative democracy is that in a representative democracy power is given wholesale to the representative who then is free to act on their own initiative. In a delegate democracy the initiative is set by the electing body and the delegate can be recalled at any time should the electing body feel that their mandate is not being met, thus power remains at the base.

Culture

Due to the impact of common ownership on the global community there'll be even more of an increase in cultural choices and options than there is under capitalism. Unrestricted to the social conformity of private property relationships, individuals and communities will be able to focus on an ongoing celebration of freedom of expression - leading to an increase in cultural diversity.

Leisure activities are likely to increase in scope and decrease in size. Presently, with package holidays the most affordable way of taking a break from the drudgery and monotony of the production line or the office, they are the most popular form of holiday.

In socialism, where the principle of free access underpins the common ownership of the means of living, our options and choices on travel and holidays would be extended and influenced by what positive contribution we can make to the country we are visiting. And with package holidays and mass tourism a thing of the past, it is likely holidays in socialism would not be restricted within a timescale of 10 to 14 days of hectic hedonism, but transformed into an unique opportunity to stay in a particular location for as long as it takes to understand the history and culture of that region. In effect the transformation in the social relationships

from private property ownership to common ownership will radically alter our perception of culture, leisure and travel.

Human nature

But wouldn't all this be against human nature? No. Socialists make a distinction between human nature and human behaviour. That people are able to think and act is a fact of biological and social development (human nature), but how they think and act is the result of historically specific social conditions (human behaviour). Human nature changes, if at all, over vast periods of time; human behaviour changes according to changed social conditions. Capitalism being essentially competitive and predatory, produces vicious, competitive ways of thinking and acting. But we humans are able to change our society and adapt our behaviour, and there is no reason why our rational desire for human wellbeing and happiness should not allow us to establish and run a society based on co-operation.

Needs have a physiological and a historical dimension. Basic physiological needs derive from our human nature (e.g. food, clothing and shelter), but historically conditioned needs derive from developments in the forces of production. In capitalism, needs are manipulated by the imperative to sell commodities and accumulate capital; basic physiological needs then take the historically conditioned form of 'needs' for whatever the capitalists can sell us.

Social evolution suggests that no mode of production is cast in stone and the dynamics of change also affects capitalism as a social system. Studies of social systems with distinct social relationships related and corresponding to their specific mode of production have identified, for instance, primitive communism, chattel slavery, feudalism, and capitalism. All of these societies changed from one into another due to the contradictions inherent in that society and also due to technological advancement which each society found itself incapable of adapting to. Capitalism reached this point over a century ago. It's time to move on to socialism.

GRAVEDIGGER

Science versus Religion

IN SPITE of the rapid decay of organised religion in most European countries, many people still cling to a vague belief in God and in related religious ideas. A few adopt and defend them fervently. How can this be so in the modern world of gene therapy and space research?

In spite of the overwhelming success of the scientific method of thinking and its application to achieving practical results, it seems to bring as many evils as benefits. For this reason, many people distrust and fear science. They do not want it to be true that science has all the answers, because that seems to mean that there is no hope of an alternative to the way things are. They would rather believe that there is a way of solving problems which lies outside the realm of science and common sense.

In spite of the desire to escape the pressures and anxieties of the modern world, and a readiness to abandon common sense in order to embrace the supposed certainties of religion, more and more people are finding difficulty in taking it seriously because so many things about religion contradict each other or experience.

The anomalies and absurdities that make it difficult or impossible for the majority of people to take religion seriously are often excused by religious apologists as being accidental features that could be straightened out. They ignore the fact that religion has had a very long history and prehistory during which the process of straightening out has been going on all the time. If we study the history and the geography of religion, we can see that the absurdities are fundamental, and that when they are finally eradicated it will mean the eradication of religion itself.

The reasons which make people want to turn to religion are genuine reasons. They are sufficiently aware of the world they live in to know that life for the great majority of people, even in 'advanced' countries, is hurried, anxious and stultifying,

while millions in the world are haunted by insecurity, poverty, starvation and the fear of war. And they feel that something could be done about these things, considering the enormous productive potential and ingenuity of modern technology. Yet it is exactly here that religion, or what is left of it, has become thoroughly integrated with the sick philosophy of modern capitalism – that the only things we can have in this life are the things that don't really matter. This is not only false – it is dangerous for the future of humanity. What angers the socialist is what this vague religious attitude which many people still retain enables their feelings and thoughts to be manipulated by the unscrupulous, through modern techniques and media of persuasion, so that they are not left free to do their own thinking. In a multitude of subtle ways people are persuaded that no real relief or improvement is possible – above all, that there is nothing they themselves can do about their problems.

Instead of retreating from science, the socialist applies scientific enquiry even more thoroughly – to human affairs themselves – and asks how it is that our living standards, our personal relationships, industrial relations, commercial practice, international affairs, are as they are, and why they change as they do. Instead of faith, humility and resignation, the socialist approach is one of knowledge – of coping with reality instead of escaping into 'higher things'.



Dreaming of ending poverty

'ENDING POVERTY need not be a utopian dream', was the headline of an article by Philip Collins in the *Times* (2 September), subheaded 'Thomas More's vision of a perfect society may be outlandish but it reminds us that Britain can change for the better.'

This year is the 500th anniversary of the publication of More's *Utopia* in Latin. An English translation appeared in 1551. More did imagine a regimented society with for instance, as Collins pointed out, everyone having to dress the same. But it is not this aspect that has interested socialists. It's his imaging a society without private property where there is planned production to meet needs and whose members have free access to what they need 'without money, without exchange, without any gage, pawning, or pledge.'

Collins (who was Blair's speechwriter) is an open supporter of capitalism and thinks that a society based on minority

ownership of the means of life and production for profit can end poverty. By 'poverty' he means a lack of enough means of consumption. As the Joseph Roundtree Foundation puts it, 'poverty means not being able to heat your home, pay your rent, or buy essentials for your children.'

This is a consequence, for some, of poverty in the means of production as these are owned and controlled by a minority only of society. Such poverty is the basis of capitalism and so is never going to be ended as long as capitalism lasts. But what about poverty in the means of consumption? Most people in Britain are able to heat their home, pay for their housing and buy essentials for their children and so are not poor in that sense. They get enough to keep themselves fit for work, raise children to replace them, and save something for their old age. But some, over 10 percent of the population, do not

How does Collins think this can be ended? He follows the Roundtree Foundation which has elaborated a plan to 'solve' poverty. Under this, by 2030 'no one is ever destitute; less than one in ten of the population are in poverty at any one time; and nobody is in poverty for more than two years.' This doesn't sound like ending

poverty, more like accepting that 'the poor ye shall always have' and trying to palliate it.

In any event, their plan is based on there being steady long-term economic growth, which capitalism is incapable of delivering. This, because under it production goes through a series of ever-recurring boom/slump cycles, during the slump phase of which poverty increases. The plan also assumes that more money will be allocated to pay more effective benefits whereas this would eat into profits and, in a period of slump, as there has been since 2009, governments are obliged to cut back on benefits to relieve the burden of taxation on profits.

Despite what Collins claims, abolishing poverty under capitalism is an unrealistic dream. Ensuring that everybody, literally everybody, gets decent food, clothing, housing, education and the other things needed for an enjoyable life is only possible on the basis of the common ownership of the means of production because society, freed from vested interests and production for profit, would then be in a position to use modern technology to produce what is needed to do this. As More pointed out, 'saying they be all thereof parteners equallie, therefore can no man there be poore or nedie.'



Andrea's Friend

THERE HAVE been many Prime Ministers who have tamed some persistently disruptive rival by giving them a job. So there were many questions asked when Theresa May promoted the likes of Boris Johnson, Liam Fox and David Davis. And among them was Andrea Leadsom, now Minister for the Environment. During the EU Referendum and subsequent Conservative leadership contest Leadsom was notable for having certain doubts about her antecedents, her unwavering prejudices and her forceful style of expressing them. It seemed likely that she would emerge as a front runner in a Tory leadership contest. Except that she withdrew before it came to that, which gave May a free run and the opportunity to promote the likes of Johnson, Fox and Davis – and Leadsom herself.

March

When Leadsom, framed in some expensive London doorway, announced her withdrawal to the assembled hacks and media gossips, it was apparent that she was supported by, among others, a man whose proximity to her and whose forlorn expression proclaimed that he was her most ardent supporter. This was Tim Loughton, the Tory MP for East Worthing and Shoreham, who was briefly Under Secretary of State for Children and Families. He had become attached to Leadsom when they were – like David Davis – undergraduates at Warwick University. They were also members of The Patricians – a black tie dining club. Loughton was already active in the Conservative Party and signed her up. It was natural that this should encourage rumours about a rather deeper relationship but Loughton has always denied this (as if it mattered). He later took a close interest in her as another Tory MP and when Cameron resigned and she announced that she was in the running for the leadership he stood out among her closest supporters. He organised a campaign which included a small, but noisy 'march' on Parliament energised by the shouts between Loughton and the rest: 'Who Do We Want?...Andrea Leadsom!!!!...When Do We Want Her?...Now!!!' The timing of this must have been faulty as it happened just before Leadsom decided to drop out of the contest so that Loughton later had to admit that the whole thing was 'a bit of a cock-up'. After all, Leadsom had quickly abandoned the 'march' to take a posh taxi to the House of

Commons. However there is no reason to think that Loughton's enthusiasm for her and the party has declined.

Blunkett

In fact his experience in politics has probably taught him something about humiliation. His first attempt to get into Parliament was in 1992 as a candidate for Sheffield Brightside. This was also in its way something of a cock-up. Sheffield Brightside was represented by David Blunkett, blind but relentlessly ambitious, who in that election took 29,771 votes while Loughton got 7,090. What may not have been apparent to Loughton massaging his grief was that Blunkett's career would not be some kind of conqueror's march through the seats and corridors of Westminster. The future Baron Blunkett of Brightside and Hillsborough endured a long period of being in and out of important and influential ministries – typically Home Secretary – but was repeatedly cut down by what came to be coyly described as 'highly publicised



Above: Leadsom.
Right: Blunkett and Loughton

matters relating to his personal life' or 'external business interests'. His standards of professional judgement were often under scrutiny, such as when an ex-Director General of the Prison

Service recalled that Blunkett had advised him to subdue rioting prisoners through the use of the army and machine guns. In one crucially influential case it was revealed that he had apparently used his powers as Home Secretary to speed up the renewal of a passport application by the Filipino nanny of one of his female acquaintances.

Sacked

Well, Loughton was able to offer a variation on that. For the 1997 election he had a gentler ride at the breezy seaside resort of East Worthing and Shoreham, where the accepted standards of poverty were rather easier than among the mills and mines of Sheffield. In the 1997 election Loughton won with a majority of 5,098, which at subsequent elections rose until in 2015 it reached 14,949. In May 2010 he had been promoted to a post known as 'Childrens' Minister' and laid down his working principles by a vote against same sex marriages on the

grounds that '...marriage is a religious institution and should be kept as a union between one man and one woman'. Despite or perhaps because of this a few months later he was sacked in one of David Cameron's reshuffles. Loughton did not take this too well, describing it as an example that the government had 'dropped the ball' over the recurrent scandal of child exploitation – 'the children and families agenda has been a declining priority'. When a reporter from the local Worthing newspaper *The Argus* asked him 'If you were doing such a great job why did Cameron sack you?' he replied 'You tell me... I was summoned to see the Prime Minister. I actually thought there was a chance I would get promoted. He sat me down and told me what a wonderful job I had done. Then he said he wanted to give someone else a go'.

War

Loughton's response to this treatment was to declare a kind of war of relentless questioning against those who had taken over from him at what was known as the Department of Education. He dismissed his successor the Lib Dem Sarah Teather (who was also sacked) on the grounds that, unlike him, she '...did not believe in family as she certainly did not produce one of her own'. This was an argument subsequently used against Theresa May, pointing out that she is childless as

against Leadsom being a mother of three.

He condemned the Minister, then Michael Gove, being like Young Mr Grace in the TV sitcom *Are You Being Served?* The response from an anonymous



member of the staff at the Ministry was to use the *Spectator* for an adjective-laden description of Loughton as 'a lazy, incompetent narcissist obsessed only with self-promotion'. By that time Loughton had been reported for using a four letter expletive about an unpaid volunteer in Worthing who had reacted to a picture of him sitting with some children in a local school by asking how many of them would be suffering from worse poverty as a result of his government's policies. In the *Sunday Times* of 7 August Dominic Lawson referred to 'The unfailingly foolish Loughton' but it is not just the likes of him that we need to be concerned over. Think about Baron Blunkett, David Davis, Michael Gove etc and about this society, with its gruesome system which they are allowed by us to represent.

IVAN

UK BRANCHES & CONTACTS

LONDON

North London branch. Meets 3rd Thurs. 8pm at Torriano Meeting House, 99 Torriano Ave, NW5 2RX. Contact: 020 7609 0983 chris.dufton@talktalk.net

South London branch. Meets last Saturday in month, 2.30pm. Head Office, 52 Clapham High St, SW4 7UN. Contact: 020 7622 3811.

West London branch. Meets 1st & 3rd Tues. 8pm. Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace (corner Sutton Court Rd), W4. Corres: 51 Gayford Road, London W12 9BY. Contact: 020 8740 6677. tenner@abelgratis.com

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West Midlands regional branch. Meets last Sun. 3pm (check before attending). Contact: vincent.otter@globalnet.co.uk. 01242 675357.

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South West regional branch. Meets 2nd Sat of even months. Railway Tavern, Salisbury, 2pm (check before attending). Contact: Shane

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East Anglian regional branch. Meets 2nd Sat. on alternate months (see 'Meetings' for details).

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SCOTLAND

Edinburgh branch. Meets 1st Thurs. 7-9pm. The Quaker Hall, Victoria Terrace (above Victoria Street), Edinburgh. Contact: J. Moir. 0131 440 0995. JIMMY@jmoir29.freemove.co.uk Branch website: <http://geocities.com/edinburgh-branch/>

Glasgow branch. Meets 3rd Weds. at 7pm in Community Central Halls, 304 Maryhill Road, Glasgow. Contact: Peter Hendrie, 75 Lairhills Road, East Kilbride, Glasgow G75 0LH. 01355 903105. peter.anna.hendrie@blueyonder.co.uk.

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FARC and the war in Colombia

IN CUBA the current government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) signed a peace accord, negotiated over the last four years, which may put an eventual end to one of the longest running civil wars in modern times. There are also smaller guerrilla forces such as the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), but FARC are the most important actor.

A national referendum will be held to confirm the terms of the peace agreement after a 52-year civil war that has cost 220,000 lives and driven more than 5 million people from their homes. FARC was set up as an armed wing of the Colombian Communist Party in 1964 and has been in conflict with the government ever since. At the height of its power, it controlled up to one-third of the country, typically remote, rural parts, but its association with the Communist Party did not mean that it was ideologically driven. It responded opportunistically to the changing conditions of its support – the peasantry – which may explain its continuity for over 50 years.

Alberto Ramos, head of Latin American Economics at Goldman Sachs, told CNBC, 'The economic peace dividend is expected to materialise gradually, through higher tourism and domestic and foreign investment, particularly in



Coffee plantation, Colombia

less safe, remote areas of the country and the rotation of budgetary resources from the military apparatus into other more productive areas, such as physical and social investment in neglected rural areas plagued with armed conflict. Over time, the economic peace dividend is expected to more than offset the initial costs associated with the disarmament and integration of the rebel forces into civil society'.

Much of the media mistakenly describe FARC as Marxist, the more nuanced reports calling it Marxist-Leninist, but its roots are in a peasant war against government policies, in particular, the Accelerated Economic Development scheme. This was a plan to promote large-scale farming to produce bigger yields of agricultural and animal products for export, and for which the government offered subsidies to big farmers and ranchers. This favoured the large land-owners who ran the latifundio-type estates which by 1970 occupied 77 percent of the arable land. Based on a legalistic interpretation of what constituted 'efficient use' of the land, thousands of peasants were forcefully

evicted from their farms and migrated to the cities, where they became part of the industrial labour pool. And so it increased the concentration of land ownership among cattle ranchers and urban industrialists, whose businesses expanded their profits as a result of reductions in the cost of labour wages after the displacement of peasants to the cities. In 1961, the dispossession of farmland had

produced 40,000 landless families and by 1969 their numbers amounted to 400,000 throughout Colombia.

But as so often happens in such insurgency, FARC resorted to kidnapping for ransom and trafficking drugs to finance its war. This newly-acquired source of wealth attracted a large number of new members who sought to escape the increasing poverty levels in Colombia. The drug trade harmed its reputation and in 1982 FARC changed its name to the FARC-EP for Ejército del Pueblo, meaning 'People's Army', then formed the Unión Patriótica (UP), a political party, with the Colombian Communist Party (PCC) in 1985. Their initial success was soon undermined by a campaign of assassination by right-wing paramilitary death squads and the private armies of the cocaine drug cartels. By 1988, between 200 and 500 UP leaders, including UP Presidential candidate Jaime Pardo Leal, were assassinated. From 1988 to 1992, between 4,000 and 6,000 UP members, including another presidential candidate, Bernardo Jaramillo Ossa, were murdered.

Those with critical faculties such as socialists try to understand just what FARC aspire to and rather than being a society inspired by Marx, it is much more mundane, a run-of-the-mill mixed economy, which means capitalism with a prominent state sector. Nor would Colombia be the first country in which guerrilla leaders become integrated with the prevailing system, and even becoming the government, for example, the Maoists in Nepal. However, much nearer at home, we see Sinn Féin power-sharing with their previous enemies.

ALJO

FARC guerrillas, 2006

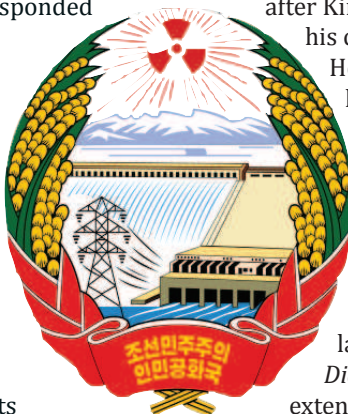




Joking Aside

On 9 September North Korea carried out yet another nuclear test. The further spread of nuclear weapons is inevitable while capitalism lasts.

It is now ten years ago that North Korea joined an exclusive octet of the US, Russia, Britain, France, China, Pakistan, India and Israel when it detonated a nuclear device which its neighbour South Korea recorded at 3.6 on the Richter scale. The group's leader, a serial hypocrite and liar, responded immediately, with the White House braying: 'an explosion would constitute a provocative act in defiance of the will of the international community'. The 'international community', being the name of the group, is very protective of their instruments, and the music they play, and new players can expect a discordant welcome. Thus the White House expected one its groupies, the UN Security Council, to 'take immediate actions to respond to this unprovoked act' (*Guardian*, 9 October 2006). Exclusion from the group meant North Korea was now a soloist intent on further developing its instrument. The leader of the group though felt reasonably secure as North Korea didn't possess a nuclear warhead small enough to be mounted on a long range rocket, and thus



capable of devastating targets as far away as the United States.

North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-un, and by association the country he rules over are often depicted as comical, something we can safely laugh at, and thus swiftly dismiss. Two years

after Kim Jong-un assumed supreme leadership of his country the 2014 film *'The Interview'* was

Hollywood's shot at lampooning him that ends happily with a rescue for the movie's hero, a US talk show host, by an American Seals unit and a de-nuclearised North Korea advancing towards the American model of democracy. The trio of Hitler, Stalin, and Mao whose state policies were directly responsible for the murder of tens of millions of people were also early targets for satirists. Charlie Chaplin, who lampooned Hitler in the 1940 movie *'The Great Dictator'* said later: 'that had he known the true extent of Nazi atrocities, he could not have made fun of their homicidal insanity'.

Is it insanity – or just normality? Killing people is big business. Developing and manufacturing weapons to

kill is an everyday activity under capitalism. Using them likewise. Whether it's the evil dictator or the conventional elected leader neither has had any qualms about unleashing 'blitzkrieg' or 'shock and awe' or any of its deadly ilk when the circumstances demand it. Mass murder is ingrained in the social system as is the means to deliver it. North Korea's own key arms dealer is the innocuously named Korea Mining and Development Agency (KOMID), and their military has its own little weapons enterprise called Hap Heng known to have provided missiles and nuclear technology to Pakistan and Iran. Syria has bought North Korean anti-tank guided missiles and KOMID has also been responsible for the sale of equipment, including missile technologies, gunboats, and multiple rocket artilleries, worth a total of over \$100 million, to Africa, South America, and the Middle East' (*wikipedia*). North Korea doesn't make it into the Top Twenty of arms dealing countries, but it probably rates highly in the Top Ten of international smugglers of nuclear and ballistic missile technology. Business as usual – just by other means.

The hydrogen bomb is the biggy. You can do a whole lot of killing with just one of these. Consequently all leaders desire one. Kim Jong-un is no exception. On 6 January, following on from three previous smaller nuclear tests, his dream may have become a reality. At the underground Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Site a detonation was carried out that the United States Geological Service measured as a 5.1 magnitude earthquake. The South Korean government played down North Korea's declaration that it was a hydrogen bomb – unsurprisingly – because a back of an envelope estimate was that the 'impact of such a weapon 'detonated 1,000 meters over downtown Seoul would produce 78,000 fatalities and somewhere around 270,000 estimated injuries'. US 'experts' including those in the White House agreed with the South Korean scepticism. However John Carlson, 'a member of the Nuclear Fuel Cycle Royal Commission and former head of the Australian Safeguards and Non-Proliferation Office declared that previous North Korean tests were purely a primary stage, that is, a nuclear explosion, 'and fairly low yield at that'. However, in the case of this test, he added that 'if it's true, it means they have made something smaller scale, capable of being put on to a missile' and that North Korea would be aiming to develop a weapon 'small enough and light enough to put on to a missile, and the usual parameters are something less than one meter in diameter, and less than a tonne in weight' (*wikipedia*).

On 24 August *Reuters* ran the headline 'North Korea fires submarine-launched ballistic missile towards Japan'. The *Daily Telegraph* reported that 'the launch of the missile, which the US Strategic Command believes was a nuclear-capable

KN-11 Nodong-D, came less than 48 hours after Pyongyang threatened to carry out a 'pre-emptive nuclear strike 'unless South Korea and the US cancelled joint military exercises'. The Japanese response to the launch came from the its Prime Minister Abe: 'It is the first time that an SLBM (submarine-launched ballistic missile) has fallen inside Japan's air defence identification zone. . . It is

a grave threat to Japan's security and an unforgivable threat to regional stability and peace'. It's believed that this successful test firing followed two recent failed ones.

A South Korean military official told *Reuters*: 'North Korea's SLBM technology appears to have progressed' and 'South Korea believes the North has a fleet of more than 70 ageing, limited-range submarines. . . Acquiring a fleet of submarines large and quiet enough and with a longer range would be a next step for the North'. Moon Keun-sik, a retired South Korean navy officer and an expert in submarine warfare added: 'they keep conducting nuclear tests and SLBMs together which means they are showing they can arm SLBMs with miniaturised nuclear warheads.' *The Telegraph* also printed a quote from those that wield the biggest stick: 'The US Strategic Command issued a statement in which it said the launch posed no threat to North America, but added that US forces remain vigilant in the face of North Korean provocations'.

As yet the US mainland isn't under threat. But the empire's tentacles encompass the planet and ten years of North Korean weapons development is reaching a crescendo. We have lived under the threat of nuclear war since Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Pundits who tell us a nuclear attack will never happen forget that it already has. Other experts tell us it's just around the corner. An insider, Robert McNamara, who worked as Defense Secretary for capitalism's pin up boy, President Kennedy, during the Cuban missile crisis revealed how close we came to nuclear war when he 'wondered aloud whether he 'would live to see another Saturday night,' and later recognised that 'we lucked out' – barely' (*tomdispatch.com*).

Art Buchwald reflected that 'you can't make anything up any more. The world itself is a satire'. Henry Kissinger, Yasser Arafat, and Barrack Obama winning Nobel Peace prizes wasn't a comic invention unlike Kim Jong-un's treatment in *The Interview*. Nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them aren't a joke. Neither are Kim Jong-un and the elite that rule North Korea.

ANDY MATTHEWS



North Korean Unha-3 rocket at Tangachai-ri space centre, 2012



Non-armed US Trident SLBM launch, with multiple re-entry warheads

Over two months has now passed since the British people cast their vote on the UK's membership of the European Union. While the mass-participatory process of the referendum and aspects of the arguments used by either side were of some interest to socialists (rising above the norm of what now passes for politics), in the main the whole affair and its outcome were disappointing for us.

Brexit, the nation-state and the workers

A question that was framed as having supreme importance ('a once in a generation chance to set the future course of the country') was yet again a debate about which particular version or configuration of capitalism should be selected. In this case, the specific question of whether a trans-national system of capitalism or a more traditional national organisation of capitalism, should be chosen.

Given that the vast majority of the electorate are members of the working class, that the turnout was relatively high and the vote was close to 50/50, it broadly means just under half the workers of Britain wanted to retain the current system while the other part wanted to return to the society that they either remembered or imagined existed before 1973. Socialists have no fundamental interest on adjudicating on this question. Nonetheless, Brexit will undoubtedly remain the dominant issue of British politics for years to come and it does shed some light on the current nature of the interaction between the state, the workers and the capitalists.

Split in the capitalist class

Although the referendum itself and the debate in the run-up to it were undoubtedly exercises in popular democracy, it wasn't the authentic democracy that we espouse. The real struggle and motivation for the referendum was a conflict between two sections of the British capitalist class. It is true that many people attended public meetings, participated in radio phone-ins, went along to TV debates and engaged in on-line discussion forums. Most people genuinely believed in the views they shared with friends or colleagues.

However these ideas and arguments that they deployed were reflective of a wider climate that had been developing over the previous few decades. An underlying controversy has been growing in British capitalism at least since the late 1980s about the merits of Britain's membership of the EU. Initially the manifestation of this was limited to the formation of small pressure groups associated with the Conservative Party and the occasional critical column in the right-wing press but Euro-scepticism soon spread into wider society. The very large capitalist

companies have always supported the concept of the European Union. These multinationals can invest tens of billions of euros and accept regulations in return for a secure investment climate. They are not really concerned whether right-of-centre or left-of-centre governments are in power in any individual country across the many nations of Europe; all that counts is that there is a broadly similar, pro-business climate in these countries. The EU as the organisational framework in which this macro-policy is implemented is attractive to them.

However, some capitalists in Britain do not subscribe to this arrangement. These include small businesses mainly producing goods or supplying services for the local home market. They are concerned with day-to-day struggles to make and keep profits and for whom the regulations from Brussels are burdensome. Also there are large capitalist enterprises whose dominant trade in goods or services are to destinations outside the EU. It's worth noting that the significant financial supporters of the Leave side came from these sectors of the economy (finance, retail, catering, publishing) where any benefits of EU membership are marginal.

Mendacity and exaggeration

Such a split in the capitalist class complicates the task of government. In most cases there is a consensual view amongst the capitalist class about the major economic questions of the day and the government (whatever its nominal persuasion) implements policies in line with this view with the justification to the public that it is necessary to promote and ensure prosperity. When a section of the capitalist class comes to a view that is divergent from more mainstream elements of the class (such as in this case the need to leave the EU) an alternative approach to directly liaising with government must be employed. Then enough voters (the vast majority

being workers) must be encouraged to believe that the proposed policy needs to be implemented and they must be used to place pressure on the government. In that sense the power that the universal franchise

gives to workers is exploited. Given that the Leave side of capitalism were victorious, this leads to an analysis of the arguments that they deployed in the debate and why they ultimately proved successful.

First of all it has to be said that the Leave campaign told some whopping lies to get their vote out. The Remain side weren't far behind



in their overblown doom-laden predictions of economic catastrophe that would befall Britain after exit. Of course mendacity and exaggeration are part and parcel of political campaigns under capitalism and in fact one of the means by which workers are continually inveigled into supporting the continuation of the capitalist system election after election. The two main planks of the Leave campaign were the loss of democracy in being part of the EU and the inability to control levels of immigration from European countries into the UK (although the large EU membership fee was also a complaint). These two issues were summed up by their effective slogan of urging people to 'take back control'.

The Leave side were appealing to two disparate target audiences with this message – firstly, patriotic and traditionalist people (more likely Tory voters) who never accepted the (slight) diminution of national sovereignty that was a requirement of EU membership. As socialists we say



the argument about a lack of democracy is fallacious. Even in the context of political structures within capitalist states, the UK is one of the few democracies with both an unelected head of state and unelected second chamber. It has a vote counting system (first past the post) that typically

creates huge discrepancies between votes received by any particular party and the number of MPs elected. In any case, real power within capitalism does not entirely lie with elected MPs. And of course the bureaucrats in Brussels, administering Euro-wide capitalism have no more or less a mandate than the bureaucrats in Whitehall handling exclusively British capitalism.

The second audience could be described as being more Labour-oriented in inclination. For example, the media reported disquiet in this constituency ('working class communities' as they were referred to) arising from globalisation and a feeling of being 'left behind'. Capitalism has internationalised itself, which was always inevitable, but many workers are used to capitalism organised around the nation-state. Up to 2016, Britain may well have had the fastest growing economy in Europe, creating more jobs than the rest of EU but many of these came with low pay and zero hour contracts. One salient feature of this 'new economy' is that many workers (and not just those at the bottom of the income scale) have no prospect of being able to buy such a basic item of human need as a house. The Leave side cannily exploited this dissatisfaction by giving the impression that in the UK there were only a certain number of houses that could be built, a certain number of school places available, a certain number of appointments at GP surgeries and that every extra foreigner reduced the availability of these to the home citizen. The Leave campaign unscrupulously played on this sense of insecurity and anger to appeal to national instincts among workers. In that sense, many workers voted on national rather than class lines (as indeed they unfortunately do in most

elections in most countries).

Right-wing populism

While many of the small left-wing groups encouraged a Leave vote (whereas socialists want an end to all versions of capitalism whether nationally based or globally organised), the main thrust of the Leave side had all the time-honoured hallmarks of right wing populism. This was most clearly manifested by the political party UKIP being the main grass-roots organisation of the Brexiteers, led by Nigel Farage. Farage is a former Tory and in his espousal of anti-immigrant solutions to the problems of modern society, especially during insecure times, has had many predecessors in European history. Currently Donald Trump is ploughing a similar furrow in the United States trying to exploit the disenchantment of a subset of American workers (white, blue collar) with the failures of capitalism to provide them with a decent life. In normal conditions, the Labour Party might have successfully countered the atavistic appeal of UKIP but one important side-effect of the campaign (that has become a front page story in its aftermath) concerns the travails of the Labour Party.

For a hundred years it has declared itself the voice of unionised workers and their families, initially seeking to transform the capitalist system, then settling for attempting to ameliorate the worst excesses of capitalism before finally under the Blair/Brown leadership being a straightforward manager of the system virtually indistinguishable from the rival Tory party. This complete capitulation to capitalism and abandonment of even the rhetoric of change has produced a wide swathe of disillusioned former Labour voters, many of whom were enticed into switching to UKIP. It is true that Jeremy Corbyn, as the current leader, has injected some excitement into progressive politics. However his election last year in some ways only emphasises the erratic and rudderless state of the Labour Party; going from Blair, arguably its most right-wing leader in history now to its most left-wing leader, and within a relatively short time frame.

Ultimately the outcome of the vote was surprising and generally unwanted by the leaders of global capitalism. Since the end of the Second World War, the trend has been towards a globalised organisation of capitalism driven by the major international companies (the top tier of capitalism). Of course as with all socio-economic patterns, this trend does not proceed smoothly but occurs in fits and starts though the underlying pattern is clearly evident.

Will Brexit be looked back on as a one-off oddity peculiar to Britain or as a harbinger of things to come, marking a departure from this particular trend of globalisation? In any case over the years, capitalism has proved itself an adaptable system and ultimately will have no serious problem accommodating Britain outside the EU.

It can be difficult to extract good news for socialists when commenting on the current affairs of capitalism. From a socialist perspective, we deplore the fact that the Leave campaign deliberately tapped into chauvinistic feelings in workers to obtain their desired outcome. Conversely what was encouraging was that many workers ignored the dire warnings of the usual paid lobbyists of capitalism (the Bank of England, the OECD, the CBI, etc.) in arriving at their decision. It shows that workers are not always the political sheep that some political strategists assume. Finally, though, it's only when workers across the world discard all notions that countries and national identities are a central part of the political landscape that real changes can be made to all our lives.

KEVIN CRONIN

Terrorism and war: is there any difference?

We say terror is terror whether unofficial and illegal terrorism or legalised state-sponsored terrorism through conventional warfare.

Since the turn of the century, rarely has a day gone by where there are no terror related stories in the news. Whether it is the Taliban, Al-Qaida or Islamic State, the perceived threat of terrorism against the United Kingdom has always appeared to be a real and ongoing danger to our lives. Whilst such media stories use the term 'terrorism' rather freely, they do so with no clear definition of what terrorism actually is. Such is the perception, exacerbated by tabloid news outlets, many individuals could be forgiven for believing that the majority of terrorist acts are committed by those of a radical Islamist background. However, the reality lies deeper than just Islamic State.

Trying to find a definition for terrorism is not easy, as there are a number of differing perspectives of what terrorism truly is. The official government definition in the United Kingdom can be found in the Terrorism Act of 2000, a summary of which is given as;

'The use or threat of the action of violence against a person, serious damage to property, endangerment to a person's life (other than that of the person committing the action), or serious interference with an electronic system, where the use or threat is designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public or a section of the public and the use or threat is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause.'

This definition can certainly be linked to Islamist terrorist acts such as 9/11, 7/7, and the recent surge of attacks in Paris, but the general interpretation of this definition fails to acknowledge such acts committed by a state. Violent government responses to the threat of terrorism have been commonplace throughout history, with the wars in Iraq and airstrikes in Syria being recent examples. These have been framed as 'counter-insurgency' operations as part of the 'war on terror', despite involving acts identical in nature to those committed by radical Islamist terrorists.

The only significant difference between the acts of 'terrorism' and 'counter-insurgency' is their purpose. Whilst groups such as Islamic State are pushing the ideals of radical Islam, capitalist governments from states such as Britain and the United States strive to achieve a change of government in countries which stand in the way of them pursuing their interests. To disguise the real aim, the American military is said to have been forced to rename their operations in Iraq from 'Operation Iraqi Liberation' to 'Operation Iraqi Freedom',

due to fears of suspicious glances towards the acronym OIL.

It is also an expression of the globalisation mentioned by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*, the constant requirement for accumulation of capital resulting in the need for capitalism to spread everywhere: 'The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.'

Whilst the threat of terrorism often haunts a conflicted society like capitalism, the heightened media coverage inflates the issue. This fear-mongering allows the state a justification for military action. For the media, any politically or religiously influenced violent act perpetrated by opponents of a capitalist state is defined as terrorism, while the violent acts committed by capitalist states are praised as 'fighting terror'. This confirms the view of the early 20th century Dutch criminologist Willem Bongers, that acts are only defined as

criminal when the resulting damage is to capitalist interests. Violent and destructive state intervention is not regarded as criminal as it is aimed at defending the interests of the ruling class and capitalism as a whole.

Bongers's theory was also confirmed by the Chilcot report released earlier this year. Despite the decision of Tony Blair to go to a war with Iraq being illegal under international law, no criminal

charges have been brought, in spite of the 500,000 civilian lives that were lost as a result of this action. All that the report finds on this is that 'the UK chose to join the invasion of Iraq before the peaceful options for disarmament had been exhausted'.

Clearly there are double standards applied when it comes to defining what a terrorist is, with the media choosing to marginalise a single group of people and to turn a blind eye to what the political elite in charge of the state does. However, it is not the current definition itself of terrorism that is problematic, but the interpretation of it by an international media platform owned by rich capitalists expressing the viewpoint of the rest of the ruling class.

WILLIAM HORNCastle



Clockwise from top: depiction of early 20th Century terrorism. IRA bombing in Coventry, 1939. The London bombings of 2005.



The Heroic Tragedy

A civil war within a civil war

The second part of our look back at the Spanish Civil War.

The Spanish civil war is often simplistically described as a war of democracy versus fascism, or by Francoist historians as Catholicism versus Soviet Communism but this hides the real multiplicity of the underlying forces that fed into the conflict. Religion, regionalism, the agrarian question, rival claims to the monarchy, and class conflict all played a role in shaping the course of events.

There was tension and conflict of interests between the various groups that made up the Republican Popular Front. The Generalitat (Catalonian regional government) sought to regain power that had been taken from them during the putting down of the military rising of July 1936. Events came to a head and culminated in the 'May Days' of 1937, as famously described by George Orwell in *Homage to Catalonia*. On 2 May 23 three trucks of assault guards, led by Rodriguez Salas the communist (PSUC – Catalanian Communist Party, pro-Stalinist) Commissioner for Public Order, arrived at the CNT/UGT controlled telephone exchange building with the intention of seizing it. Taking the occupants by surprise they were able to enter the building but were eventually forced back by machine-gun fire. The sound of the fighting alerted those nearby and news of the raid quickly spread throughout Barcelona. A standoff ensued. On one side were the various forces of government and the PSUC, and on the other the CNT-FAI, backed up by the POUM (a small non-Stalinist communist party, similar in outlook to opposition Communists of Russia) and a smaller group The Friends of Durruti (a group within the CNT that objected to collaboration with the government).

CNT leaders made their way to the Generalitat to demand that Aiguader (Commander of the Assault Guards and Republican National Guard who was assumed to have given the order) and Rodriguez Salas resign, to pacify the situation. But no compromise could be met. The CNT declared a general strike. A network of barricades were constructed to resist the government forces, and movement of non-CNT vehicles was prevented. Sporadic shooting could be heard throughout the streets of Barcelona. A call for calm was put out over the radio, to no avail.

Anarchist and POUM divisions left the battlefield and attempted to head to Barcelona, only to be turned back by republican aircraft. Government reinforcements arrived in Barcelona via sea and road. The possibility of a full civil war within the civil war was becoming increasingly real. Seeing the futility of such a turn of events CNT and FAI leaders proposed that the barricades be taken down on the condition that no reprisals be carried out by the Assault Guards. The government agreed and on 7 May the barricades began to disappear. Five days of street fighting had resulted in more deaths and casualties than in the initial putting down of

the military coup. The era of anarcho-syndicalist power in Barcelona was over. The PSUC and the PCE (Spanish Communist Party of which PSUC was the Catalanian branch) used the events to bolster their position within the government.

World war by proxy

In many ways the Spanish Civil War was a dress rehearsal for the Second World War, with foreign intervention playing a decisive role from the beginning of the conflict. The fascist states of Germany and Italy provided troops and hardware to aid the Nationalists, using the conflict as a testing ground for new equipment and techniques. In the first days and months of the conflict it was impossible for large Nationalist troop movements to be conducted via the sea, as the Republic had control of the navy. So German aircraft provided transport for the otherwise stranded forces of the Army of Africa commanded by General Franco, this being the first operation of its kind in history with a force of some 13,500 men being moved from Morocco to the mainland by the end of the operation. Another historical first befell the Basque town of Guernica which, later in the conflict, was to be the first civilian town destroyed by air raid. The other western European countries in effect supported the Nationalists by preventing arms being passed to the Republicans under the guise of non-intervention. Only Russia and Mexico supported the Republic and Mexico only diplomatically.

The aim of Russian foreign policy was to seek anti-Nazi allies in the region, a policy dependent on French capitalism. As the



spread of workers' control would be a threat to the interests of the ruling classes in the area, the goal of the Russians was to secure the victory of the Republic but at the same time stem the successes of the syndicalists. As the Republic's only source of arms came from Russia, administered by the Spanish Communist parties, they were able to apply much leverage to the situation; though not to the extent that the Republic was a mere puppet of Moscow, as is sometimes claimed.

The Spanish Holocaust

'It is necessary to spread terror. We have to create the impression of mastery, eliminating without scruples or hesitation all those who do not think as we do. There can be no cowardice. If we vacillate one moment and fail to proceed with the greatest determination, we will not win. Anyone who helps or hides a Communist or a supporter of the Popular Front will be shot' – General Mola.

Away from the front-lines a wave of violent killings took place, claiming nearly 200,000 victims. Though atrocities occurred on both sides, the nature of the killings in the two different zones reflected two different attitudes towards violence and human life. In the Nationalist zone the repression was of a premeditated and coldly calculated nature designed

to suppress the enemy through the imposition of terror. It has been estimated that, out of all the victims of rearguard repression, 150,000 were at the hands of the Nationalists. Once an area had been conquered they would round up known Republicans and trade unionists and mass executions would follow. Republican women would have their heads shaved and be forced to drink castor oil, so as to soil themselves in public. Thousands were subjected to rape and other forms of torture. The Nationalists were to continue with their policy of bloody repression well after the civil war had been won – in the years following the war a further 20,000 Republicans were to be executed.



Guernica after the bombing

The disappearance of conventional structures of law and order led to atrocities on the Republican side, but these were mostly brought to an end within the first few months of the war. Violence was spontaneous and came from the bottom up, rather than being the result of a deliberate policy. In the countryside armed gangs roamed from village to village, executing anyone that was suspected of being sympathetic to the Nationalists. Victims included captured rebel army officers and troops, the clergy, landowners and businessmen. Nearly seven thousand members of the church were murdered or executed. Some efforts were made to protect and assist the evacuation of Nationalist prisoners and others at risk, an equivalent move not seen on the Nationalist side. Workers organisations and political parties set up autonomous police forces and secret prisons, known as *checas*. As the conflict went on these would increasingly be brought into central control; though the Communists, assisted by imported NKVD Soviet secret police, would hold on to their *checas*, using them not only against suspected Nationalists but also against the CNT-FAI, POUM and other advocates of the social revolution.

Conclusion

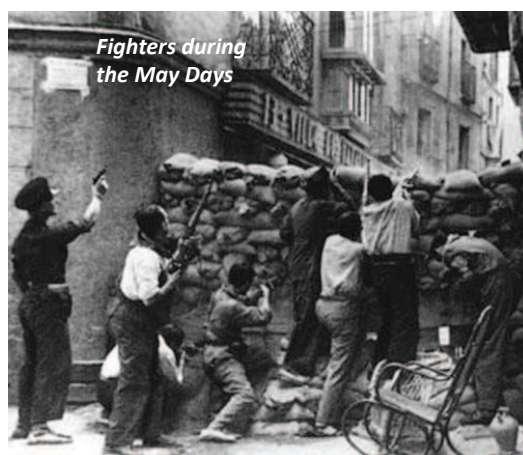
It is all too easy to pass judgment from the distance of history. Any praise or criticism must be made in the light of the fact that without the military rising none of the subsequent events would have happened, and everything that did happen was unavoidably shaped and influenced by the conditions of war and the wider international situation. The social revolution in Catalonia only occurred because the normal functioning of state power had been disrupted by the military rising, with control of the economy temporarily passing into the hands of the syndicalists.

Could the social revolution (better understood as 'trade-union controlled capitalism') have spread further? The actual situation of the time meant that the odds were vastly stacked against this. The syndicalists were isolated both within the Republic and internationally. The central government

deliberately held back credit and resources from the syndicalists, and international trade deals meant that foreign trade could only be conducted via the Madrid government, so economically the syndicalists found themselves behind a blockade.

But suppose, for the sake of argument, the CNT had somehow managed to become the dominant force throughout the whole of the Republic. How then would their programme have fared? Worker-controlled capitalism is subject to the same pressures as those of capitalism proper. Even with the whole industry of the nation forged into one great co-operative, the logic of market competition would remain. The national co-operative would have to be able to acquire goods and raw materials from the outside world and to do this it would have to profitably dispose of its own. In order for this to be possible enough surplus-value would have to be squeezed out of the working class so that at least an average rate of profit could be realised. As with any capitalist enterprise, the pressure would be to continually increase productivity of labour, ultimately to the detriment of the labour. The logic of capitalism is not imposed because of the greed of individual capitalists but because market competition compels enterprises to accumulate or die. Communism is not capitalism without capitalists but a system where productive activity is directly controlled by the whole of society, rather than being mediated through exchange on the market.

On the dawn of the military rising, the working class of Spain faced a bleak choice; face repression and extermination at the hands of the fascists, potentially die fighting, or suffer



the isolation of exile. Though the outcome was not and could not have been socialism, the efforts of a strong and well-organised workers movement did for a short time and in many

respects successfully improve their living conditions. However, at the same time we should not over-romanticise, since the positive achievements of the syndicalists were happening against a background of violence and slaughter. The cooperative worldwide society we call socialism cannot be brought about through coercive means, as what is gained by force has to be held onto by force. Repression and summary killing can only contribute to an atmosphere of authoritarianism. Nonetheless one cannot help but admire the bravery of the ordinary men and women who courageously set about building what they saw as the new society, whilst at the same time resisting the forces of a military rebellion. War and civil war is always a tragedy, but in this case it was a tragedy of heroic proportions.

Following the death of Franco and the return to parliamentary democracy in Spain, anarcho-syndicalism returned to play a small but significant, though greatly reduced, role in the Spanish labour movement. Spain's third largest union currently is the CGT (General Confederation of Labour), formed from a split with the CNT in 1979, with a reported membership of 80,000.

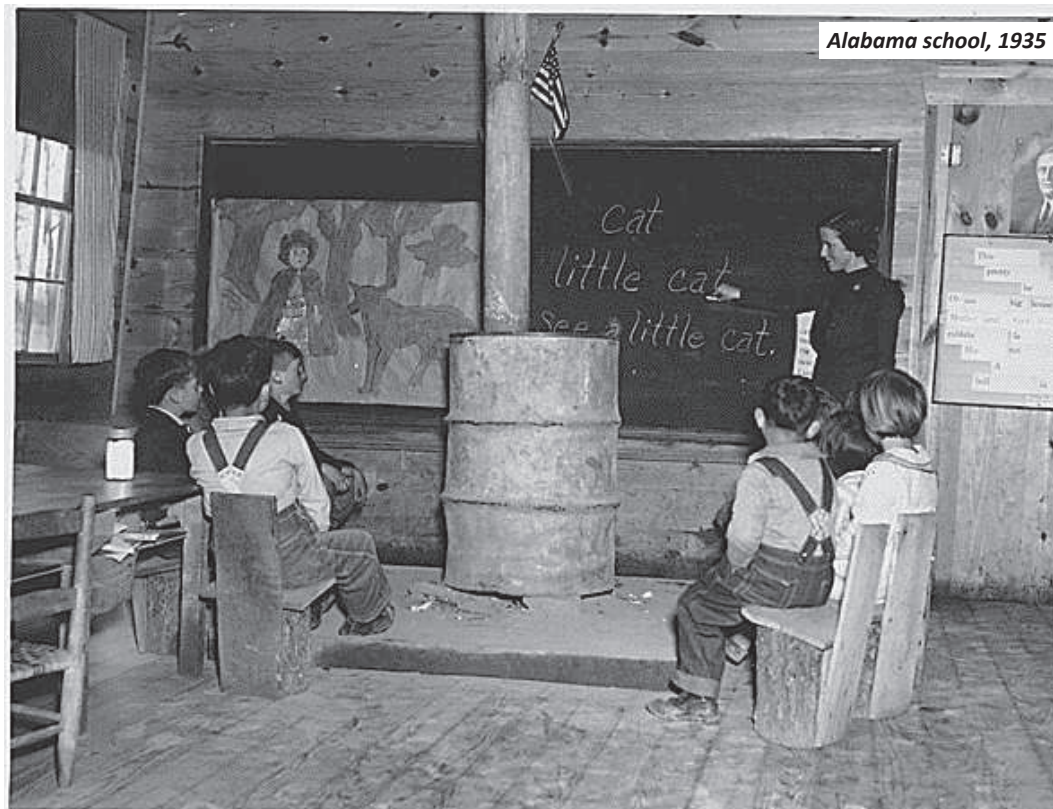
DJP

Writing is one of the most significant achievements in human history. It enabled knowledge to be recorded permanently rather than passed on orally, perhaps inaccurately or only partially, from one person to another. Later developments – movable type, typewriters, word-processors, the internet – made the dissemination of ideas even more effective. But imagine being blocked from this world completely: you can get an idea of this by looking at a text in a script you are not familiar with (written in Arabic, Chinese, Thai, for instance). It is far more disconcerting than looking at something in a language you do not know but written in the Roman alphabet (Hungarian or Turkish, say). And then think what it would mean if all examples of written language were as opaque and meaningless as that.

Importantly, illiteracy is not just a matter of being completely unable to read and write. The concept of functional illiteracy relates to the fact that people may be able to sign their name and read simple texts but not cope with many of the requirements of everyday life (from reading most official documents to filling out forms or applying for a job). Unfortunately, the definitions of this are rather woolly and vary greatly, and it is clearly not a simple either-or notion. Historically – and internationally-based comparisons are therefore difficult.

There was a time when only a very small part of the population were literate, perhaps as few as ten percent in the Roman Empire. As an illustration of this, punctuation was originally developed, from the eighth century CE onwards for English, in order to help people read a text (often a religious one) out loud in days when the vast majority could not read. Naturally the situation changed, though rather gradually.

It is estimated that even in the 1840s only about two-thirds of men in Britain were literate and half the women; but this just means they could sign their names, so many of these may still have been functionally illiterate. Elementary education was unavailable to many, frequently very short, and often of poor quality anyway. The low level of literacy was a bar not just to a better-paid job or personal learning but also to the spread of ruling-class and religious ideas. The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge was founded in 1826 as a way of conveying such ideas to an increasingly literate public, but only lasted just over twenty years. Employers needed a literate and better-educated workforce, and workers also acquired literacy and other abilities on their own initiative at



Alabama school, 1935

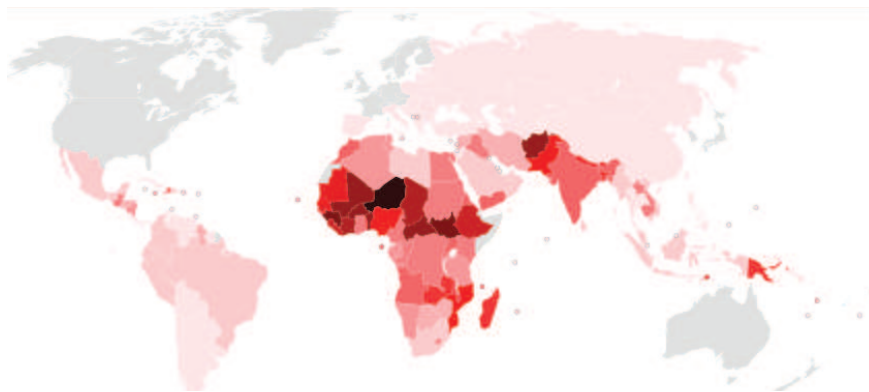
night schools, Sunday schools, mutual improvement societies and Mechanics' Institutes, though these were far less open to women. Some people learned to write so they could pen letters to a sweetheart.

Literacy rates increased throughout the nineteenth century, but many people were unaffected by these changes. Robert Roberts (*The Classic Slum*) records that in pre-1914 Salford his mother acted as a 'village scribe' communicating on behalf of local people with courts, charities, hospitals and so on: 'she thought that about one in six of our adult neighbours were either illiterate or nearly so'.

In 'developed' capitalist countries, the extent of current illiteracy can be surprising, to put it mildly, especially at a time when the state and other agencies assume that people who come into contact with them are literate, if not computer-savvy. The National Literacy Trust states that over five million adults in England – one in six – are functionally illiterate, having literacy levels at or below those expected of an 11-year-old (similar to the situation Roberts described). In Quebec, according to the



Sumerian tablet, c. 2600 BC, Louvre. It's a bill of sale for a male slave - if you can read it.



Literacy: black and dark reds: 15 - 50%; pale reds and pinks: over 50%; grey: no data

Literacy Foundation, one person in five has serious difficulty understanding and using a written text. The US Department of Education reports that one person in seven cannot read, and one in five reads below a fifth-grade level (roughly, the last year of elementary school); and this has hardly altered in ten years.

Globally, the literacy rate (and bear in mind all the qualifications around such a term) for those over fifteen is claimed by UNESCO to be 86 percent. Naturally the less well-off countries have far lower rates: for instance, 38 percent in Afghanistan, and just 19 percent in Niger. Further, women have in general far lower levels of literacy than men: in Pakistan, the literacy rate for men is 70 percent, but for women just 43 percent. War as well as poverty can naturally disrupt schooling, and in many places the main language of education is not the same as the one children speak at home. Getting on for 800 million people worldwide cannot read, and two-thirds of these are female. The number of those aged between fifteen and

twenty-four who cannot read is shrinking, though, so global illiteracy may well be set to decrease over the coming decades.

One common theme of the literature produced by organisations aiming to promote literacy is the cost of illiteracy, not just the consequences for the individuals concerned but for the wider society (for the ruling class, in other words). Those who are functionally illiterate are far more likely to go to prison, be unemployed, live on state benefits, and hand their situation on to their offspring; the children of illiterate parents are often illiterate themselves. It is not hard to see the lines of causation here: poverty, poor education, disrupted family life, a home with

little if any reading matter, these may well lead to children with the same difficulties as the situation is reproduced. So illiteracy can create problems and expense for the ruling class and their government. It is claimed, for instance, that prisoners who receive no literacy support are nearly four times as likely to re-offend as those who get such support (begintoread.com).

The extent of illiteracy in the world is truly unconscionable. Every human should have access to a good-quality education, and literacy is an essential part of this. Ensuring this happens would imply the dedication of many resources in terms of equipment and the time and energy of teachers and others. But millennia after the invention of writing, illiteracy can and should be done away with, like hunger, homelessness and poor health care.

PAUL BENNETT

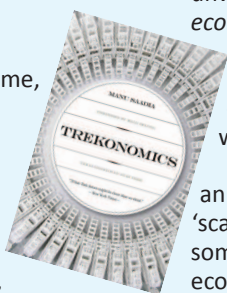


Beyond economics

THIS YEAR is also the 50th anniversary of *Star Trek*.

Although not the main theme, or even a minor one, it is clear from the characters' behaviour and occasional asides (at least in the first two series) that it's a money-free world. Set in the 23rd and 24th centuries, scarcity no longer exists as anything material needed to meet human needs can be produced by 'replicators'. This prompted one trekkie, Manu Saadia, to write *Trekonomics: the Economics of Star Trek* that appeared earlier this year and which sparked a discussion on 'post-scarcity economics'.

Actually, 'post-scarcity economics' is a contradiction in terms as academic economics defines itself as the study of how societies and individuals allocate scarce resources. The opening chapter of a typical American textbook (*Economics* by Byrns and Stone) is headed 'Economics: The Study of Scarcity and Choice'. Paul Samuelson, in his much more widely-used textbook of the same



title, invents 'The Law of Scarcity':

'If an infinite amount of every good could be produced, or if human wants were fully satisfied, it would not then matter if too much of a particular good were produced. Nor would it then matter if labor and materials were combined unwisely... There would then be no *economic goods*, i.e., no goods that are relatively scarce; and there would hardly be any need for a study of economics or 'economizing'. All goods would be *free goods*, like air.'

This is not a 'law' but a definition and an odd one at that. In its normal sense 'scarcity' means there's not enough of something, that it's in short supply. But economics defines it as a situation where Samuelson's 'infinite amount of every good' cannot be produced, i.e. as the absence of sheer abundance.

For Byrns and Stone 'a world in which all human wants are instantly fulfilled is hard to imagine.' But this is just what *Star Trek* does imagine and what its creator, Gene Roddenberry, insisted should be a background assumption. It is thus a direct challenge to economics and economists.

Accusing Roddenberry of espousing 'utopian socialism', a certain Gardner Goldsmith asserted that a 'no-money society' was a fantasy:

'Like Roddenberry, many thinkers have tried to envision a world in which there is no need for money, no market exchange, and no property. And every one of those

thinkers, whether be they followers of John Lennon, Michael Moore, or Karl Marx, has overlooked one key insight: man's nature does not change.'

As if we hadn't heard that one before! Paul Krugman made a more intelligent point that, while replicators might be able to produce material things in demand, they wouldn't be able to provide services.

Star Trek is of course fiction. But Roddenberry's assumption raises the question of what humans would do (besides exploring space) if they didn't have to work to satisfy their needs. Provide services for each other perhaps?

Even in 2-300 years time humans will still have to put in some work to satisfy their needs, if only to maintain the replicators. But this doesn't undermine the case for a society based on common ownership of the means of production where exchange and money would therefore be redundant and where people work at what they do best and take according to their needs.

Scarcity has already been conquered, not in the economists' eccentric sense of the absence of sheer abundance, but in the sense that the resources, technology and human skills already exist to produce enough satisfy likely human needs and wants. No need to wait for the invention of replicators to establish this down here on Earth in the 21st century.



Prison Break

WE'D LIKE to think that scaring children into learning something wouldn't be an officially-approved educational technique. Unfortunately, even mainstream schooling carries a subtle threat – getting high grades is supposed to be a way of avoiding poverty and

dead-end jobs, although we might not have realised it when we were younger. This threat is made blatant in the 'scared straight' approach of teaching teenagers to avoid anti-social behaviour.

This method involves young people caught up in small-scale crime being taken to the local prison to see what life is like behind bars. *Troubled Teens: Jail Shock* (CBS Reality) brings to the telly several American schemes, with blunt, no-nonsense names like 'Reality Check', 'Straighten Up' and 'Reset', as well as 'Scared Straight'. The emphasis of these schemes is on warning the teens about the hellhole they could be sent to if they continue with their behaviour, and the impact this would have on their families. Their approach is to make the teenagers think about the consequences of their actions, rather than covering issues of 'right' and 'wrong'.

The teens have been involved in gangs, thefts, under-age alcohol use, promiscuity, fighting, truancy and cannabis smoking. Before visiting the slammer, they tend to be cocky about their behaviour, and several later realise their attitude is a way of coping with not having much hope or self-esteem.

When the teenagers arrive at the jail they're ordered to remove any piercings and put on drab prison overalls, then handcuffed and led in single file through the corridors. Most of them already have the shocked, sad expression on their faces they'll have throughout their visit. Some smirk or talk back, and in return get a blast of orders from one of the prison officers, who treat the teens with the same kinds of shouty oppression as the inmates. Some of the guards relish how they will 'break' the teens.

The teenagers are then paraded in front of the prisoners, who shout and jeer at them from their cells or behind windows. 'You want to be here?', 'You gonna be mine', 'this ain't no place for you'. Some inmates try to provoke the teens to show them they're not as tough as they think, others plead with them not to make the same choices. Then, in a shock tactic even more blatant than all the other shock tactics, the doors open and the prisoners storm out. The teens then get their faces yelled at, with threats for the few still daring to talk back. The guards don't intervene, suggesting that the inmates' boundaries have been agreed beforehand. The aggression is a warning, rather than a real danger to the teens, and perhaps the prisoners find something cathartic in

the shouting.

When the teens are shunted into a meeting room, they meet with individual inmates, jailed for murder or drug offences. They introduce themselves with their prison number, and one adds that they may have a number, but they're nothing while they're in jail. The prisoners talk about how their identities and decisions have been taken away. As one of the officers says, when people get locked up they become 'a slave of the state', as written in the 13th Amendment.

Each of the prisons tweak the formula, often in bizarre directions. On some visits the teens are made to eat the revolting prison food, get shown the morgue, and speak with their crying parents through a window as if it's visiting day. One jail makes the teens wear placards which say things like 'I am a thief', and at another an officer demonstrates how easily an inmate can get dragged into an empty room. Another group is shown a 'behaviour modification cell', painted pink because men traditionally don't prefer the colour. And one of the teens goes with her mother to meet a funeral director, and watches silently as they plan her funeral as if she's died through her behaviour.

The cameras return to the teenagers a month after their jail jaunt to see whether it has prompted them to make changes to their lives. Most of those we see have calmed down, made more effort with studying, changed who they socialise with and are getting on better with their families, so as a result, feel more optimistic and happy. Despite these apparent successes, research into the effectiveness of the 'scared straight' approach hasn't convinced British authorities to try it here.

A College of Policing briefing from 2014 concluded that these methods 'have a harmful effect and increase offending relative to doing nothing at all'. Strangely, seeing the tough regimes of prison life doesn't really prevent teenagers continuing with behaviour which might lead them there, and may even encourage them. The programmes' worrying approach of trying to teach through humiliation, shock and oppression, of aiming to brutalise the teenagers out of living their often brutal lifestyles, just doesn't work. However, 'even non-confrontational, educational programmes were shown to have no significant effect on the frequency or severity of subsequent offences', according to the briefing. This suggests that there are wider, deeper reasons which have more influence over people caught up in crime and anti-social behaviour. The pressures of living in our competitive, divided, alienating society have more impact on us than one day in jail.

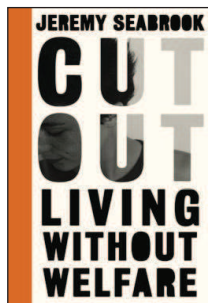
MIKE FOSTER



Overcrowded conditions in San Quentin prison, California, 2006

Pushed Around

Jeremy Seabrook: *Cut Out: Living Without Welfare*. Pluto Press/Left Book Club £12.99.



This volume combines two elements. One consists of interviews Seabrook conducted in the West Midlands, mainly Wolverhampton, with people who were at or near the bottom of the social

pyramid. These are interspersed with his comments on the 'welfare' system and government attacks on it.

Some of the experiences revealed in the interview accounts are just appalling, and many go back years, well beyond the current austerity policies. One woman is nearly sixty but has only ever had one holiday in her life; she is lucky if, after everything else has been paid, she has £10 a week for food. Another woman is paying off a loan at £43 a fortnight, has rent arrears of nearly £400 and owes £1400 on water bills. One man has been paying back £7.20 a week to the Department for Work and Pensions for thirteen years, after he misunderstood the rules for working while claiming benefits. He is illiterate and could make no sense of the various letters he received. Older immigrants from South Asia (especially the women) often speak little English, and this affects their ability to cope with the benefits system.

The bedroom tax is often mentioned as a big contributor to people's problems. One woman with hereditary neurofibromatosis keeps her electric wheelchair in one room, but it is counted as a bedroom for purposes of the tax. Many people live in permanently cold homes because of the cost of heating, and they buy the very cheapest food (such as twenty pieces of chicken for £2 from a supermarket). In addition, the difficulties of living on benefits are not just financial: there is the loneliness and isolation, and the disrespectful (to put it mildly) treatment from Jobcentre staff. Many who had dreadful experiences as children, whether from sexual or other abuse or the early death of a parent, are still suffering in later life, but the welfare system pays little attention to such past histories.

Seabrook's main claim is that poverty (in the sense of destitution) has to remain because, from the view point of capitalism, it represents a deterrent aimed at those who are living somewhat above this level. The poor must be punished but should not be eliminated; they can be used to frighten others into conformity. The welfare state might appear to be

redundant, given the wealth of advanced industrial countries, but it is in fact still needed, as misfortune, such as ill health, an accident or redundancy, can strike almost anyone.

Seabrook believes there is little chance of overthrowing capitalism, but his book provides plenty of evidence of why this needs to be done as soon as possible.

PB

Global class

Immanuel Ness, *Southern Insurgency: The Coming of the Global Working Class* (Pluto Press, 2016)



The author teaches political science at the City University of New York. He has also been a union organizer and an activist in various projects in defense of workers' rights. He has shown particular concern with the

plight of migrant workers.

Theories of the 'post-industrial society' are based on the perception that industry is declining and the industrial working class shrinking or even disappearing. Ness points out that this is an illusion. Manufacturing and mining remain of vital importance to the global economy and employ more workers than ever before. However, they are no longer concentrated in the 'Global North' – North America, Europe and Japan – as they were in the twentieth century. They have moved to developing regions in the 'Global South' such as industrial zones in the three countries chosen by the author for his case studies – India, China and South Africa.

The statistics that Ness marshals in support of this thesis are indeed striking. The share of the Global South in gross fixed capital formation increased from 14 percent in 1990 to 31 percent in 2010, while its share of industrial employment in formal sectors of the economy rose from 50 percent to 80 percent over the same period. The corresponding shift in the geographical distribution of wealth is less dramatic because much of the industry in the South is owned by capitalists in the North who repatriate the profits.

Repeated use of the term 'Global South' in this connection may be misleading, inasmuch as the new industry is not spread throughout what used to be called the 'underdeveloped' or 'developing' countries. It is heavily concentrated in just a few countries and in just a few areas within those countries. Most of Africa, for example, is still pre-industrial. Clearly we

need a terminology more differentiated than binary divisions like developed/developing or North/South.

The main interest of the book lies in its descriptions and analyses of workers' struggles in three regions – the Gurgaon industrial belt near New Delhi, the Pearl River Delta in southern China, and the mining belt in the northwestern part of South Africa. The three cases differ considerably in terms of political context, union organization (or its absence) and market conditions, although there are some significant common features – notably, the sharp divide between relatively secure and well paid 'permanent' workers and insecure and poorly paid 'temporary' or contract workers (often migrants).

Of the three groups studied it is Chinese workers who have made the greatest gains in recent years. This is despite the fact that – in contrast to India and South Africa – they are prevented from forming independent trade unions and can organize themselves only within the workplace. The crucial factor seems to be an emerging labor shortage – an inadvertent result of the one-child policy. Employers in India, where labour is in abundant supply, have responded to labour unrest by firing and replacing entire workforces. In China this is not a feasible option.

The account of the miserable pay and harsh working conditions of platinum miners in South Africa, whose protests led to the massacre of striking workers at Marikana in 2012, reveals how little 'black' working people have gained from the abolition of apartheid. 'Black' politicians, union bureaucrats and police are no less ruthless than their 'white' predecessors in manipulating and repressing 'black' workers in the service of (still mostly 'white') capital.

Ness appears not to have a definite political affiliation, but his theoretical framework (in particular, his concept of 'imperialism') shows signs of Leninist influence.

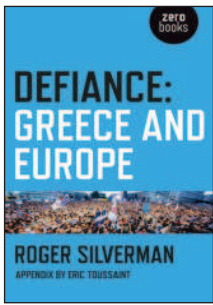
He has illusions regarding the position of workers in China under Mao, claiming that the working class enjoyed social benefits and job security. In fact, the division between permanent workers, who did possess such benefits, and temporary workers, who did not, was already well established at that time.

The author's writing style could do with improvement and the tables contain some errors. Nevertheless, the book has a lot to offer and is well worth reading, for it does at least attempt to grasp the evolution of capitalist society and the working class as global phenomena.

STEFAN

Greek dead-end

Defiance: Greece and Europe. By Roger Silverman. Zero Books. 2016. £15.99



Yet another book by a leftist on Greece, this time by veteran Trotskyist Roger Silverman.

The first 6 of the 15 chapters are a potted history of Greek politics since a Greek state was set up

in 1821. Although there were elections before, often rigged, Greece cannot be said to have become a capitalist political democracy till after the overthrow of the Colonels' military dictatorship in 1973. Up till then the coercive parts of the state machine – the armed forces and the police – were not controlled by the elected parliamentarians but were a law unto themselves, intervening from time to time to overthrow any government which acted or threatened to act in a way they disliked.

Greece had had radical leftwing governments before Syriza was elected in January last year. In the 1980s it was Pasok. Like reformist governments everywhere, and in the 1980s like Mitterrand in France, Pasok failed to make capitalism work in the interest of the majority class of wage and salary workers and ended up imposing austerity on them. It failed again in the 1990s and in 2009. So Syriza's failure was nothing new.

Although he thinks the Syriza government could have acted otherwise than it did (by, for instance, nationalising the banks) he is under no illusion that there was a way-out – a way of avoiding austerity – within capitalism. Recognising that there was no immediate prospect of capitalism being ended (which would have had to be worldwide), Silverman is not as harsh on the Syriza Prime Minister Tsipras as some of his other critics. He virtually concedes that, given capitalism and isolated in Greece, the Syriza government didn't really have any other choice than to impose austerity itself. He quotes a letter he received from a Cypriot Trotskyist:

'The present battle in Greece has been lost. That the capitulation of Tsipras is the defining act of this loss cannot be questioned, but in all probability this battle would be lost a little further down the road. Tsipras could see this and he chose to throw in the towel rather than take further punishment.'

Silverman is critical of the leftwing breakaway from Syriza, Popular Unity, in which SOAS professor and former Syriza MP Costas Lapavistas is prominent, with its call to leave the euro and restore the drachma, a move which, in Silverman's

Standedge Tunnel

Travel between Lancashire and Yorkshire generally requires crossing the Pennines, whether by road, rail or canal. Some routes follow the hills and valleys, and were much used by pack-horses carrying cotton, wool and other goods, but as transport and other technology improved it became more practical to dig tunnels. The tunnel at Summit (near Littleborough) was, when completed in 1841 and for some years, the longest railway tunnel in the world. But some of the most interesting tunnels are those at Standedge (don't pronounce the first 'd'), between Diggle and Marsden.

There are three rail tunnels, built at various dates between 1848 and 1894 as the rail network expanded enormously. Only the 1894 tunnel, which is just over three miles long, is still in use. Earlier than these is the canal tunnel, which after several abortive attempts, was completed in 1811: it is often described as 'the longest, deepest and highest canal tunnel in Britain'. It carries the Huddersfield Narrow Canal and for financial reasons, like a number of other canal tunnels, was built without a towpath, so narrowboats could not be pulled through it by horses. Instead, men called leggers had to lie on their backs and push against the tunnel roof or walls to move the boats. Usually two leggers worked together, and it took on average four hours for a loaded boat to go through the tunnel. As with many others, the Huddersfield Narrow Canal fell into disuse as canals became less popular for transporting goods and so ceased to be profitable, and closed in 1943. It reopened in 2001 for recreational use, largely through the work of volunteers, and trips through the tunnel are now possible (not powered by leggers).

At Marsden on the Yorkshire side is the Tunnel Visitor Centre. This contains some helpful display boards and a few original bits of equipment. The hard work of the navvies who built the canal and tunnels is referred to, but there seems to be no mention of those who died building them, and to be honest the centre is rather underwhelming. However, some fine walks on Marsden Moor and surrounding areas do allow you to explore the industrial and transport history of the local area, and so of Britain more generally. **PB**



view, would probably make things worse (hyperinflation). In fact, he can even see a positive side to the euro:

'A currency union represents a positive attempt partially to overcome the reactionary effects of the survival of the nation state, an obsolete relic of a bygone era.'

He employs the same language as us, writing that there is no solution to the problems facing Greek workers either within capitalism or within Greece alone, and that the only way out is to get rid of capitalism on a world scale. But of course he doesn't mean the same. He envisages (wait for it) this being led by 'a single party of the working class' leading to a regime similar to what the Bolsheviks established in Russia after 1917. Trotskyists are so predictable.

ALB

Labour, Lib-Dem, Tory



The Socialist Standard examines their case

Socialist Standard, Freepost, London SW4 7BR
www.worldsocialism.org/spgb



50 Years Ago

Confusion on the left

IT IS obvious that those trade union leaders who back the wages freeze are not acting in the interests of their members. But even those

who oppose the freeze are hopelessly confused when it comes to politics. This was well shown at a meeting on September 1 organised by five of the unions opposing the freeze.

Not seeing Socialism as a practical alternative, the five general secretaries who spoke offered their own solution to the present financial problems of the British capitalist class: cut military spending overseas; impose import controls; launch a productivity campaign and end the status of sterling as a reserve currency. On this last point, loud applause followed a statement of the general secretary of the Association of Scientific Workers in which he said that they did not want 'our' currency being a commodity traded in by foreign bankers! Again, Clive Jenkins of ASSET commended De Gaulle's policy of erecting a fence round France to prevent Americans buying up French industries. 'I'd like to see the same here', he said amidst

applause.

This petty patriotism expressing itself as a dislike of international bankers (and America) is a characteristic of the Left, one which clearly distinguishes them from Socialists. Socialists know that patriotism is a delusion as workers have no country.

Jenkins' main charge against the Labour government was that it was incompetent. Wilson was wrong, he said, in claiming to have been blown off course; he had steered right into the eye of a hurricane. 'Had the government not heard of Keynes?' he asked, suggesting that since Keynes any government that allowed unemployment to grow must be incompetent.



This is another myth of the Left. Governments fail to solve our troubles not because they are incompetent or insincere or irresolute but because they are trying to do the impossible. Our problems just cannot be solved within capitalism. The Left, with their so-called solutions, merely serve to keep alive the myth that capitalism can be made to work in our interests. That is why Socialists oppose them.

(*Socialist Standard*, October 1966)

ACTION REPLAY

Colin Veitch: pioneer football trade unionist

IN JULY Bobby Moore was honoured with an English Heritage blue plaque, but he is not the first footballer to be recognised in this way. In 2013, Heaton History Group ran a successful campaign to have Colin Veitch awarded a Newcastle City Council black plaque on his house.

Colin Veitch was born in Heaton in Newcastle in 1881. He captained Newcastle Schools in 1895.

At Rutherford College, where he studied after leaving school, he played for their football team, then regarded as one of the finest amateur sides in the North East, attracting the attention of Newcastle United for whom he played as an amateur before turning professional in 1899.

He was a versatile and talented football player who captained Newcastle United during their Edwardian heyday when the team won three Football League Championships (1905, 1907 and 1909), the FA Cup in 1910 and finalists five times between 1905 -1912. A one-time schoolteacher, he introduced the



idea of using a blackboard to illustrate and develop tactics diagrams in pre-match planning and post match analyses.

He was an activist in the Association Football Players Union (AFPU) set up in 1907. In November 1908 *Thompson's Weekly News* announced that several leaders of AFPU including Colin Veitch

would write regular articles for the paper, providing a forum for the union's views. The AFPU began negotiations with the Football Association but in April 1909 these ended without agreement. The union threatened a strike and in June the FA ordered all players to leave the AFPU, and warned that if they did not by 1 July, their registrations as professionals would be cancelled.

Veitch resigned from the AFPU in order to carry on negotiations with the FA and led the struggle to have players reinstated. In August 1909, the FA agreed that professional players could be members of the AFPU and the dispute ended. Veitch was later the chairman of the AFPU, now the Professional Footballers Association, for a number of years. In politics he was a leftwinger and had once been asked to stand as a Labour candidate but turned this down.

He died in 1938 after contracting pneumonia while recuperating on holiday in Bern in Switzerland at the age of only 57. He is still remembered in Newcastle as one of their greatest players.

KEVIN

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Meetings

For full details of all our meetings and events see our **Meetup** site: <http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/>

MANCHESTER

Saturday 1 October, 2.30 p.m.

"Where Will I Get My Apples?"

A discussion about 'Democracy, production and distribution in a socialist world.' The discussion will be opened by Peter Rigg.

Venue: The Unicorn, 26 Church Street, Manchester, M4 1PW

CANTERBURY

Saturday 8 October from 12.00 Noon

Street Stall

In the Parade pedestrian precinct.

NORWICH

Saturday 8 October, 2.00 – 5.00p.m.

East Anglian Regional Branch meeting

Venue: The Reindeer Pub, 10 Dereham Road, Norwich, NR2 4AY.

Meeting up for lunch first at 12.00 Noon at The Belle Vue Pub, 46 St Philips Road, Norwich, NR2 3BL

LONDON

Clapham

Saturday October 15 and Sunday October 16 from 10.30 a.m. – 5.00 p.m. both days

Autumn Delegate Meeting

Venue: Socialist Party Premises, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN

LONDON

Chiswick

Tuesday 18 October, 8.00pm

THE US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Committee Room, Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, W4 4JN

Edinburgh

Wednesday 26 October, 7.30 p.m. - 9.00 p.m.

"Introduction to Socialism"

Venue: The Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh, 17 West Montgomery Place, Edinburgh, EH7 5HA

London Anarchist Bookfair

Saturday 29 October, 10.00a.m. – 7.00 p.m.

Venue: Park View School, West Green Road, London, N15 3QR

The Party will have a stall outside the venue.

NOVEMBER 2016

NORWICH

Saturday 12 November, 3.00 p.m.

"The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists"

Film followed by discussion

Detail of venue to be confirmed.

EC Meeting

Saturday 5 November, 52 Clapham High Street, London, SW4 7UN. Correspondence should be sent to the General Secretary. All articles, letters and notices should be sent to the Editorial Committee.

Declaration of Principles

This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation

of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



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'Brokers in Egypt's underground trade in human body parts use prostitutes to tempt migrants to sell their kidneys as hospitals turn a blind eye to illicit dealing in donated organs for transplants, a report says. Undocumented African migrants arriving in Cairo, desperate for cash, told the British Journal of Criminology that sex workers were offered as a "sweetener" before or after removal of their organs. "(One pimp) used the services of sex workers as leverage when negotiating fees with both sellers and buyers," the report said. "A night with a sex worker was offered as an extra inducement to sell." Organ purchase is banned in Egypt, though the country is a common destination for transplant tourism, along with India, Pakistan and Russia, according to separate research by Erasmus MC University Hospital Rotterdam in the Netherlands' (news.trust.org, 2 September).



**Cairo market - it's amazing
what you can buy**

[illegible]

Daily Mail leader article, 15 January, 1934

Wages in a sick world

The *Daily Mail* is a mine of misinformation which has supported fascism and today works with the *People's Daily*, the official organ of the so-called Communist Party of China. That the British Medical Association's 'Junior Doctors Committee (JDC) is full of Labour Party members' and 'many are Jeremy Corbyn supporters and have links to Left-wing group' may well be true, but to say they 'idolise [sic] Marx' and want to make 'capitalism history' (dailymail.co.uk, 2 September) is nonsense. Socialists support action by doctors, just as we do with any such activity fought on sound class lines, but would urge them as fellow members of the 99 percent to note the remarks of one Dr. Marx: 'the working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the ultimate working of these everyday struggles. They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects... that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady' (*Value, Price and Profit*. 1865).

Not yet endangered

Some 40 percent of animal species are parasites, a fact recognised by the nursery rhyme *Fleas* (adapted from a satirical poem by Swift):

*Big fleas have little fleas,
Upon their backs to bite 'em,
And little fleas have lesser fleas,
and so, ad infinitum.*

D. H. Lawrence in one of his poems compared the mosquito and capitalist:

*The mosquito knows full well, small
as he is
he's a beast of prey.
but after all
he only takes his bellyful,
he doesn't put my blood in the bank.*

'Mosquitoes kill more humans than any other animal and were linked to roughly 500,000 deaths in 2015, mostly from malaria. For more than a century, humans have used bed nets, screens and insecticides as weapons, but mosquitoes keep coming back. They are now carrying viruses like Zika and dengue to new parts of the world' (wsj.com, 2 September).

Capitalism has eradicated Rinderpest and Smallpox, and the spread of Zika may hasten the demise of its carriers. Yet, the driving force of capitalism is the pursuit of profit not health. Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are aptly named as they are largely confined to members of our class living in Africa, Asia and the Americas. The eradication of NTDs is possible but not profitable. The establishment of socialism means the end of capitalism and the parasitical 1 percent.



**Remind you
of anyone?**

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